

# *Tips for Teens*

## *The Truth About AIDS*

### *What is AIDS?*

AIDS is a condition caused by a virus called HIV that attacks a person's immune system, making it defenseless against diseases and infections. The full medical name for AIDS is ***Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome*** and the virus is called the ***Human Immunodeficiency Virus***. HIV is transmitted through all forms of unprotected sexual intercourse, i.e., vaginal, anal, or oral sex without the proper use of a latex condom, and through sharing needles or syringes with someone who is infected with HIV. Because HIV can "hide" in the body for 10 years or more before it shows up as AIDS, you must never assume that just because you can't "see" it in a person, that it isn't there!

*Alcohol and other drugs can alter the immune system and make a person more susceptible to acquiring HIV infection.*

### *Adolescents and AIDS*

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HIV/AIDS has been the sixth leading cause of death among 15-

to 24-year olds in the United States since 1991. One in five persons newly diagnosed with AIDS is in the 20-29 year age group. This means that HIV transmission probably occurred while they were in their teens, or that they were HIV-positive while they were in their teens. More than half of the new cases of HIV infection in 1994 were related to drug use, either through direct use or through sexual contact with someone who injected drugs.

Research has shown that while most teenagers understand how HIV is transmitted and how they can avoid infection, they need to understand that it can happen to them. According to recent CDC studies conducted every two years in high schools (grades 9-12), many teenagers are engaging in high-risk behaviors which not only make them vulnerable to acquiring HIV/AIDS, but also to acquiring other sexually transmitted diseases associated with drug use.

## ***How Can You Prevent HIV/AIDS From Happening to You?***

\*Educate yourself. Know the facts. Be smart.

\*Do not use alcohol or any kind of drugs.

\*Do not use any needles that have been used by other people for tattooing or piercing or for injecting drugs or other substances such as steroids, vitamins, hormones, or insulin.

***Know that it's OK not to have sex. But if you do, protect yourself and use a latex condom.***

***Avoid contact with a person's blood, semen, or vaginal fluid.***

## ***Sex and Drug Use are Linked Among Teenagers***

Like driving under the influence, sex under the influence can be deadly. Because alcohol and other drugs negatively affect good judgment in regard to sexual behavior, people under the influence are more likely to have sex, practice unprotected sex, or engage in "risky" sexual acts.

\*Many students report using alcohol or drugs when they have sex.

\*One in 62 high school students reports having injected an illegal drug.

\*HIV transmission is occurring among people who trade sex for non-injected drugs such as crack.

***Peer pressure can lead to sex, drugs, and AIDS.***

***People infected with HIV may look and feel healthy for a long time.***

## ***Facts for Girls/Women***

Young women are the fastest growing group contracting HIV/AIDS through unprotected sex.

- ❖ As of 1994, 58,428 adolescent and young adult women had been diagnosed with AIDS. Reported cases of HIV-infected women for the same period was 15,241.
- ❖ About 75% of the AIDS cases in women were associated with the use of injected drugs, either through direct use or through sexual contact with a man who injected drugs.
- ❖ African American and Hispanic women make up 21% of all U.S. women, yet they represent more than 75% of all the AIDS cases reported among women.
- ❖ AIDS is the fourth leading cause of death among women between the ages of 25 and 44 in the U.S. It is the number one cause of death among African American women in the same age group. Many of these women were infected while still in their teens.
- ❖ While HIV can be transmitted during vaginal, oral, or anal sex, the transmission occurs most often during vaginal intercourse.
- ❖ A pregnant woman infected with HIV/AIDS can transmit the virus to her unborn baby.

## ***Resources***

AIDS Action Council  
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20009  
202-986-1300

AIDS & Adolescents Network of New York  
666 Broadway, Suite 520  
New York, NY 10012  
212-505-9115

AIDS Prevention League  
136 West Wood Avenue  
Akron, OH 44302  
216-376-4384

Gay Men's Health Crisis  
129 W. 20th Street  
New York, NY 10011  
212-807-6664

Health Education Resource Center  
101 W. Read Street, Suite 825  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
410-685-1180

Names Project Foundation  
2362 Market Street  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
415-863-5511

National AIDS Clearinghouse  
P.O. Box 6003  
Rockville, MD 20849  
301-217-0023  
1-800-458-5231

National AIDS Hotline  
1-800-342-AIDS  
1-800-344-SIDA (Spanish)  
1-800-AIDS-TTY (TTD/TTY for deaf and hard  
of hearing)

National Minority AIDS Council  
300 I Street, NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20002  
202-544-1076

Teens Teaching AIDS Prevention  
3030 Walnut  
Kansas City, MO 64108  
816-561-8784 or  
AIDS Hotline for Teens  
1-800-234-Teens

To learn more about AIDS or  
obtain referrals to programs in  
your community, contact:

**Resource Center  
State of California  
Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs  
1700 K Street, First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814**

**(800) 879-2772 (California Only)  
(916) 327-3728  
FAX: (916) 323-1270  
TTY: (916) 445-1942  
Internet: <http://www.adp.ca.gov>  
E-Mail: [ResourceCenter@adp.state.ca.us](mailto:ResourceCenter@adp.state.ca.us)**

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